United Nations

Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council, in Presidential statement on Saturday, condemns Rwanda massacres and demands that interim Government and RPF prevent attacks against civilians; asks Secretary-General to report on actions that might help restore law and order.

+ Report by Committee on Peace-Keeping Operations says Force Commanders and Special Representatives should have appropriate authority over missions; stresses need for well-defined command and control structure.

+ International Civilian Mission in Haiti says Haitian military personnel shot dead at least 12 people in Gonaïves last month; demands that High Command launch inquiry into massacre.

+ UNICEF Executive Board concludes 17 full country programmes and six short-term ones at second regular session.

+ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights begins three-week session in Geneva.

+ Congress on Public International Law to be held at Headquarters in March 1995 in observance of Fiftieth Anniversary of United Nations.

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Saying it was appalled at the wanton killings of innocent civilians in Rwanda, the Security Council demanded on Saturday that the country's interim Government and the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) prevent attacks on civilians in areas under their control. In a statement read out by its President, Colin Keating (New Zealand), the Council said attacks on defenceless civilians had occurred throughout the country, especially in areas controlled by the interim Government's armed forces. It called on both parties to publicly condemn such attacks and to commit to ensuring that persons responsible for them were prosecuted and punished.

(more)

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The Council restated its demand for an immediate cease-fire and cessation of hostilities between the interim Government and the RPF. It condemned all breaches of international humanitarian law in Rwanda, and noted that killing members of an ethnic group in order to destroy the group in whole or in part was a crime punishable under international law. Expressing deep concern for the thousands of refugees who had fled the fighting and killings, the Council called on all States to assist the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other relief agencies operating in Rwanda and bordering States.

The Council appealed to States not to provide any military aid to the parties, and said it was willing in principle to consider an arms embargo against Rwanda. It asked the Secretary-General to make proposals for the investigation of serious violations of international humanitarian law during the conflict. It also asked him to undertake other efforts, including consulting with the Organization of African Unity (OAU), to report on actions that might help restore law and order. The Council reiterated that the Arusha Peace Agreement was the only viable framework for resolving the conflict and called on the parties to renew their commitment to it.

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The Special Committee on Peace-Keeping Operations completed its substantive work for the year on Friday by adopting a 91-paragraph report, which will be presented to the General Assembly at its forthcoming forty-ninth session. The report said Force Commanders or Special Representatives should have an appropriate degree of financial and administrative authority over peace-keeping operations. Force commanders and other key personnel should be associated with operation planning from the outset, and there should be effective coordination between field headquarters and contingent commanders on planning and management.

Stressing the need for a unified and well-defined United Nations command and control structure, the report urged that immediate steps be taken to strengthen arrangements for political direction, military command and control, and consultations. It called for the establishment of basic guidelines and performance standards for training peace-keeping personnel, and encouraged the establishment of training centres on a national or regional basis.

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The International Civilian Mission in Haiti (MICIVIH) has determined that uniformed Haitian military personnel shot dead at least 12 people in the town of Gonaïves late last month. In a statement issued today, the Mission strongly condemned the killings of innocent civilians and demanded that the High Command of the Haitian Armed Forces open an in-depth inquiry in order to establish responsibility for the massacre.

(more)

The Mission said it was impossible for its team of observers to determine the exact number of victims becauses their corpses had disappeared into the sea or had been hastily buried. It also noted that there had been a massive exodus of people from the area in Gonaives where the killings had taken place.

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The Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) approved 17 full country programmes, six short-term programmes, and many bridging programmes during its second regular session last week. UNICEF Executive Director James P Grant told the Board that the new programmes for Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Baltic States would benefit millions of children. They would enable UNICEF to leverage its limited resources in countries in transition while continuing to focus on developing ones, particularly in Africa.

In another action, the Board supported UNICEF participation in the new United Nations joint programme on HIV/AIDS. UNICEF will also closely monitor the rapidly changing opportunities to support Palestinian children and women.

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The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights today began its tenth session in Geneva. Most of the three-week session will be devoted to examining how States parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights live up to their obligations under it.

The Committee examines reports from States parties on measures taken, progress made and difficulties encountered in implementing the Covenant. At the current session it will consider general reports from Belgium, Morocco, Kenya and Uruguay, and reports on specific Articles of the Covenant from Iraq and Romania. The Committee will also review implementation of the Covenant by Gambia, Guinea, Mali and Mauritius, which have not submitted a report since ratifying it.

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The codification, progressive development and implementation of public international law will be the focus of a Congress to be held at Headquarters from 13 to 17 March 1995. The Congress on Public International Law is being convened within the framework of the Decade of International Law (1990-1999) and as part of the observances of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations.

Under the theme: "Towards the twenty-first century: International Law as a Language for International Relations," the Congress will aim to assist the world community, particularly the legal profession, in meeting global challenges. It will discuss topics relevant to the International Law Decade, such as promoting and implementing principles of international law; the peaceful settlement of disputes; and developments in the codification of international law.

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